NTI utilizes videos, real life stories and case examples throughout the training modules. Topics of loss and grief, trauma, racism, and attachment have the potential to trigger difficult personal and work-related memories and reactions for staff. Self-care is critical to child welfare work, and to the learning, as well. We offer some strategies that may reduce the impact of the stresses often encountered and to cope with those that may arise.

*WHEN OUR OWN TRIGGERS ARE ACTIVATED*

For child welfare workers, case managers, and other helping professionals involved in the care of traumatized children and their families, the essential act of listening to trauma stories may take an emotional toll that compromises professional functioning and diminishes quality of life. Individual and supervisory awareness of the impact of this indirect trauma exposure—referred to as Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)—is a basic part of protecting the health of the worker and ensuring that children consistently receive the best possible care from those who are committed to helping them. (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Secondary Traumatic Stress)

Additionally, many people come into social work with their own personal trauma histories. Some studies have shown a relationship between a clinician’s personal trauma history and his or her secondary trauma (Effective Ways Social Workers Respond to Secondary Trauma).

SUPERVISOR TIPS FOR MEDIATING STS

- Reflective supervision – use supervision to help staff reflect on personal feelings and reactions to concepts, stories and videos
- Dedicate a team or staff meeting to creating strategies to support self-care
- Assess and manage caseload balance
- Allow flextime scheduling where possible
- Create self-care buddy systems

References:

Self Care Starter Kit, University at Buffalo; https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit.html
Self Care for Caregivers, The National Center on Family Homelessness; http://508.center4st.com/SelfCareforCareGivers.pdf
Secondary Traumatic Stress, A Fact Sheet for Child-Serving Professionals, National Traumatic Stress Network; www.NCTSN.org

What was valuable to you?

Trauma and Attachment

“presenting such deeply important ‘connecting’ work, and integrating the concepts of trauma and attachment into a practice model”

“Hearing testimonies and life stories was impactful”

“the information on grief work and attachment”
Tips for Self-Care

Physical
- Eat and drink regularly
- Exercise
- Sleep well
- Take vacations
- Get regular medical care

Emotional
- Increase self-awareness and label your emotions
- Find a healthy outlet for your emotions
- Listen to your thoughts

Professional
- Take a break during the day
- Have lunch away from your desk
- Seek supervision/consultation
- Set limits with clients
- Set limits with colleagues
- Solve little problems
- Be realistic and flexible
- Be aware of your limitations

Spiritual
- Find meaning in things
- Pray/meditate

Social
- Spend time with friends and family
- Stay connected with others
- Participate in your community
- Become part of a team sport/activity
- Seek out positive people
- Learn to ask for help

Psychological
- Seek a balanced life with work, friends, family, play, and rest
- Make time for self-reflection
- Engage in relaxing activities
- Adopt a positive attitude

Don’t Hesitate to Contact Your State Implementation Specialist

California and Oklahoma
Emily Smith-Goering 202.798.3424
Email Emily

Illinois, South Carolina and Tennessee
Mary Wichansky 240.606.4846
Email Mary

Maine, Minnesota and Washington
Lisa Maynard 585.507.7588
Email Lisa

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative